10: Cooke D-5 (1886) 1899
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not great, no doubt the night dews, which are quite heavy on Rapa Nui, and with which the grass is loaded in the mornings, amply supply all their requirements in this respect. 312

At the habitations, the rain falling on the roofs of the houses was collected in iron tanks, and the water thus obtained was unexceptionable. During the winter season, April to October, when the winds are variable, there is ample rainfall, and fresh water is abundant.

Having no knowledge of the potter's art, earthen vessels are unknown, [323] although red clay of fine quality is plentiful on the island. Neither does the cocoanut palm, so indispensable to the natives throughout Polynesia, grow upon the island, at the present day at least. A variety 415 of gourd flourishes luxuriantly, however, and the fruit of this, properly 137 seasoned, furnishes them with vessels for holding their water.

The flora of the island is a very meager one. Tradition has it that 137 it was barren until King Hoto Metua, the "Prolific Father," with his Queen and followers, landed and took possession, bringing with them seeds and fruits.

Except in the immediate vicinity of the houses occupied by Messrs. Salmon and Brander, the island may be said to be treeless. In the places mentioned a few fig, acacia, paper mulberry, and other trees grow to a fairly good height. In other parts of the island may be seen, in places in considerable numbers, a hard-wood tree, more properly bush or brush, called by the natives *toromiro*. These must have flourished fairly well at one time, but are now all, or nearly all, dead and decaying by reason of being stripped of their bark by the flocks of sheep which roam at will all over the island. None of the trees are, perhaps, over 10 feet in height, nor their trunks more than 2 or 3 inches in diameter. The wood is exceedingly hard and heavy, somewhat resembling our apple, and the natives used, and still use it, to this day in making their house Gods, their Penates. These are rudely carved out of the solid 532 wood, hideous imitations of the nude human form, male or female; 2 to 3 feet in length, with preposterous development of chest and preternatural collapse of abdomen, as though famine had brooded over the land and the patient had perished of inanition; with attenuated forms, long, slender arms and legs, narrow faces, a goatee, long, prominent ears, etc. In the eyes of these idols the iris is usually represented by a circular button of bone, generally cut from a human skull, while a fragment of obsidian, fixed in a round hole in the center of this, and which glistens in the light, makes a fair imitation of the pupil, both being deftly fitted in the wood of the ball. On the first occasion when the writer saw a skull from which several such buttons of bone had been removed for the purpose mentioned, he was impressed with the idea that the ancient Rapa Nuis, like the ancient Peruvians in the time of the Incas, were acquainted with the operation of trephining and performed it in a much neater manner. Subsequent investigation speedily undeceived him on that point.